BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 08632 489 2

№ 7549a92

THE TRUSTEES OF THE
PUBLIC LIBRARY
OMNIVM LVX CIVIVM
OF THE CITY OF
BOSTON
1852 1878

15F

THE

STRANGER IN THE CHURCH.

75.49A.92

BY THE

RT. REV. GEORGE BURGESS, D. D.,

BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF MAINE.

NO. XXXII.

BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY THE TRACT COMMITTEE

OF THE DIOCESE OF MASSACHUSETTS.

FOR SALE BY JAMES B. DOW,

AT THE DEPOSITORY, 141 WASHINGTON STREET.

1848.

C

Frm 4505.72
299.062

7549 b.92

THE STRANGER IN THE CHURCH.

I have been desired to reply simply to the question, What is the Episcopal Church, or, by what is it distinguished from other bodies of Christians? The statement is desired to be such as to give to persons who know scarcely any thing of that Church, a clear, though general, idea of its constitution, history, doctrines and customs. This is my task; and the experience of many, in their first acquaintance with the subject, will be my guide.

Almost every large village in New England contains several places of worship. In the eye of the law, all denominations have the same rights; some men, who think little and believe nothing firmly, regard them all as sects equally good or equally evil; while people of piety often speak of some of them as "evangelical," and of others as in error. The inhabitants of New England are intelligent; but it cannot be supposed that most of them can have often attended the worship or heard the doctrines of all these denominations. Some have never seen an Episcopal church; many have never entered one; and it would be strange if what is unknown were not often misunderstood.

A person may thus have grown up to manhood, unable to see for himself. We will suppose that he

now comes to live in some place where an Episcopal church stands on the same green or street with the Congregationalist, the Baptist, the Methodist and the Universalist meeting-houses. Sometimes, perhaps, he hears the first named simply "the church," as if it were the only one. In his own home, he never heard, although he often read, of churches; except as societies of believers. He easily understands that the name is given to the place from the assembly, and that it carries with it a kind of sacredness, since where two or three are accustomed to meet in the name of the Lord, He is accustomed to be with them. He can see, for the same cause, why Episcopal churches are said to be "consecrated," at their dedication; why they are used for public worship only, and not for popular meetings, lectures, courts and elections; why men, when within their walls, always remain uncovered. It is because a place "where prayer is wont to be made" is a place where God has promised to be specially present. But, asks the stranger, is not a meeting-house such a place? Why, then, is it not called a church, and treated as sacred? He is answered, that the custom comes from the Puritan settlers of Massachusetts. They had been trained up in a land where all the churches were Episcopal. They forsook those churches; and in their zeal against all ceremonies, refused to think their places of worship sacred; called them houses for meeting; and used them for every good purpose, as well as for religious services.

It is observed, too, by the stranger, that the name given by the Episcopalians to their place of worship is not "the Episcopal Church," nor Mr. Smith's or Dr. Brown's Church, as the name of the pastor may chance to be; but Trinity Church, or Christ Church, or Zion Church, or Grace Church, or St. Paul's, St. John's, St. Peter's, or the name of some other saint of the New Testament. He finds that this has been an old practice in all Christian coun-

tries. Once it was abused, as if the saint had some charge of the church; but now it is preserved only because it is a pleasing way of distinguishing one church from another, and because it honors the memory and example of holy men of old. It has been taken up, too, by other denominations; and the Congregationalists have now the "Edwards Church," at Northampton, the "Church of the Pilgrims," at Brooklyn, and the "Church of the Puritans," at New York.

The stranger has heard much at his home of the admission of individuals to Congregationalist churches; of their covenant; of their discipline; and of their excommunications. Perhaps he is himself a member of one of those churches. He discovers, in conversation, that Episcopalians have a somewhat different language. They speak of baptism as the only admission to the Church of Christ; and he perceives at once that, as Christ has appointed this, there can be no other. But do all who are baptized enter into a covenant? Yes, into the covenant of faith and obedience; if they are adults, by their own promise; if infants, by those who bring them for baptism. Do all these receive the Lord's Supper? All who are baptized as adults, and all who, having been baptized in infancy, renew their covenant and profess their faith in the presence of the congregation. Have they church-meetings, meetings of the communicants, for the exercise of discipline? They have none: discipline is in the hands of the pastor. The stranger hears nothing of investigations, trials, committees, divisions amongst neighbors, concerning some scandalous story. He hears, perhaps, that the discipline of the Episcopal Church is not strict; but he learns, at the same time, that it does not pretend or attempt to be a field without tares. Its ministers are bound to be faithful in "reproving, rebuking, exhorting, with all authority." But they cannot excommunicate, except where there is plain and un-

doubted proof of such guilt as, even in the judgement of charity, cannot exist along with a true repentance. They may advise a thoughtless, inconsistent, backsliding person to withdraw from the holy table till he can come with a subdued heart. But they cannot impose terms of communion, which Christ has not commanded. They cannot search the hearts of their brethren. They must not expel any whom their Master may admit. Discipline, however, when it must be exercised, is exercised by them, and silently. May not a person, then, be exposed to suffer through the mistake or prejudice of a pastor, young, ardent, or inexperienced, or injudicious? He has then an appeal to the Bishop, to whom the pastor must make his report, and who has been chosen to his office at a ripe age, after much experience, and on account of his judgement and impartiality.

Here, then, the inquirer already arrives at that feature of the Episcopal Church which gives its name; the Episcopal office, the office of bishops. He has seen the title in the New Testament; but there it seemed to be given to common pastors or elders. It signifies, he has been told, a superintendent; and every pastor is a superintendent. He asks whether there was at first any higher officer, besides the apostles. He is reminded of Timothy and Titus. They were not amongst the apostles; and yet St. Paul instructed them, in his Epistles to them, to ordain elders, to rebuke them, and to set in order the things that were wanting. They were thus set over elders, and were more than elders: what were they? The inquirer looks through the Epistles called by their names: and at the end he reads that Timothy was "ordained the first Bishop of the Church of the Ephesians," and Titus "the first Bishop of the Church of the Cretians." These statements do not indeed belong to the Epistles themselves, although they are very ancient. He asks, then, whether they

are confirmed by history; and he is told that, immediately after the times of the apostles, all churches had bishops, who presided over the elders and deacons. He inquires whether there were no Congregational churches in those days; and he learns that, unless he can find them in the New Testament, he cannot find a single one in all the countries where the apostles preached the gospel, nor in any other country, till modern times. With some surprise, he considers that all the Christians of Palestine, Syria, Greece, Egypt, Armenia, Italy, Spain, Russia, Sweden, Denmark and South-America, are, and always have been Episcopalians; that such are the great mass of Christians in France, England and Ireland; that, of those who are not, almost all, as well as in Germany, Switzerland, Holland and Scotland, are Presbyterian, not Congregational. The Episcopal Church amongst ourselves, then, though it be small in numbers, is not alone in preserving the episcopal office: it has with it all the ancient churches, from the time of the apostles; and far the larger part of all Christendom at this day.

Now the stranger begins to look with a new interest on that little church, which before he passed by so carelessly, because he scarcely thought of the meaning of its name. He sees that it has something which the churches of Jerusalem and Antioch and Ephesus and Rome and Smyrna had, and which the Congregational and Baptist meeting-houses have not. He has read of Simeon, who succeeded the apostle James as Bishop of Jerusalem, and was a martyr; of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, who was thrown to the wild beasts, soon after the death of St. John; of Clement, one of the first Bishops of Rome, who is mentioned by St. Paul as one of those "whose names are in the book of life," and who wrote an Epistle to the Corinthians, that is next to the New Testament in age, authority and spirit; and of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, who had been a

scholar of St. John, and who was burned at the stake. The stranger thinks with some interest of a Church that has bishops still.

There is, indeed, no bishop in his neighborhood: there is but one in the State. Was it thus, he asks, in ancient times? Undoubtedly, many of the ancient bishops presided over a far greater number of ministers and people than all that are embraced within the Episcopal Church in one of the States of America. As the Church increases, the number of its bishops will be increased; and even now, some of the larger States have more than one.

The stranger observes, also, that the great Methodist society, throughout the United States, is called "the Methodist Episcopal Church," and has its bishops. He sees that it is not now a part of "the Protestant Episcopal Church;" and he learns, on inquiry, that within a hundred years they have been separated. The first ministers of the Methodist Church were ministers of the Episcopal Church; but they were not bishops; and it does not appear to the stranger that they could give what they had not received. Wesley, an elder, presbyter or priest of the Episcopal Church in England, was the founder of the Methodist society. The first Methodist Bishop in this country was sent out by Wesley to be a superintendent of the Methodists in America; and others were elected here, to hold the same office; but none of them was ordained as a bishop by any bishop. On the other hand, the first bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States were ordained or consecrated as bishops by the bishops of the Episcopal Church of England or Scotland. These had been consecrated by bishops before them, who had been also consecrated by others, back to the times of the apostles. The stranger perceives this difference between the Methodist bishops and those of the Episcopal Church; and understands what is called the "apostolic succession."

He has heard nothing, as yet, of deacons in the Episcopal congregation. Have they none? He is told that their deacons are generally young clergymen, who either assist the minister of some large parish, or are themselves settled for a time over some smaller charge. He reflects for a moment. Were not Stephen and Philip deacons! But they were also ministers: his friend from college tells him that in the Greek Testament the word deacon is the same as minister; and he remembers that both Stephen and Philip preached and baptized. When the deacons of the Episcopal Church, like those of whom St. Paul spoke, by "using their office well," have "purchased to themselves a good degree," they are commonly ordained as presbyters or priests, which is but the same name with that of elders.

But the inquirer hears of parish officers, whose duties are not strictly spiritual. These are the two church-wardens, and six, eight, ten or twelve vestrymen. The church-wardens, men of respectability and worth, and usually communicants, take the lead, and the vestry-men are a kind of council and committee, in the charge of the Church, in providing for the maintenance and order of divine service, and in transacting the various business of the parish. All this the stranger thinks harmless and useful; and not the less so because the old English names are preserved, and they are called the Wardens and Vestry, and not the Society's Committee, just as the Minister is called the Rector. He finds no fault as yet in his Episcopalian brethren.

As yet, however, he has not witnessed their worship, nor examined their doctrine. Some persons, he knows, suspect them of too near relationship to the Roman Catholics. He determines to go into their church some Sunday morning, with open eyes and a candid mind. As he enters, he is a little struck by its appearance. Besides the pulpit, there is a lesser and similar desk; and the communion-

table is enclosed within a railing, around which is a narrow platform, as if for kneeling. He remarks that each worshipper, on reaching his seat, kneels or stands for a few moments in the attitude of silent prayer. He cannot but approve a practice which so tends to make men "take heed what they hear," and how they ask; and he, too, silently prays that "the meditations of his heart may be acceptable in the sight of his Strength and his Redeemer."

The minister now enters, and, with the same silent prayer, takes his place in the lower desk. He wears, besides the bands about the neck, a full robe or surplice of white linen with a black scarf. The surplice has been for fifteen hundred years the dress of the priest in the performance of public worship: the scarf comes in the place of a similar article in the dress of the English clergy, after the Reformation. Such garments, but more costly, were worn by the Jewish priests, and commanded. The armies in heaven are described in the Revelation as "clothed in fine linen, white and clean." Therefore, the white robe also was thought most fitting for those who were to lead the prayers of the people, and to minister at the altar. While the stranger thinks of the holiness which becometh the house of the Lord, and how clean those should be who bear the vessels of the Lord, he is willing that both the minister and the people should be reminded of the same thoughts, even by the surplice; and his prejudice against it, if he had any, disappears. He knows that this very garment has thus suggested to himself thoughts of holiness and of heaven.

The minister reads a few words from the Scriptures; and the people stand up to hear. They are words which speak of the presence of God in His temple, and of repentance as an acceptable sacrifice. A brief exhortation follows; and then all kneel down, and utter together a solemn form of confession. It is read, like all the rest of the service, from

the Book of Common Prayer, which is open before every worshipper.

That the prayers are read does not offend the intelligent inquirer. He perceives that they could just as easily be said from memory. It occurs to him that psalms and hymns, which are also prayers or praises, must be sung from books; and that the best prayers of the best ministers always have the appearance of having been composed before. Indeed, he knows that when he has heard the same minister often, he has heard substantially the same prayers; and he could not wish it to be otherwise. He remembers how he has been pained, when it has been otherwise, by the pauses, the omissions, and even the improper language. Almost all good prayers, he owns, are forms, forms which have been prepared with much thought; and is it not better that the people, if they are to be agreed "touching any thing which they shall ask," should see the prayer which they are to offer? As to the lawfulness of forms of prayer, he thinks of the Lord's Prayer, and only wonders that he has heard it so seldom. As to the forms of the Prayer-book, he cannot but confess, as all men have done, that human language was never framed, more appropriate, more solemn, or more sublime.

These thoughts, however, are put by till he has left the house of God. In the mean time, he listens and prays with his fellow-Christians. After the confession, the minister rises from his knees, and in the name and by the authority of Almighty God, declares the forgiveness of all who truly repent and believe the gospel. Again he kneels, and all voices join in the Lord's Prayer, as the first petition of sinners who hope that they have found pardon. Then, all arise, and give "glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end." This is the doxology, which was used by all

Christians from the beginning of Christianity, and never dropped till the Trinity was denied.

Possibly, the manner in which the confession and the Lord's Prayer were said, by the minister and people together, or that in which the doxology and other parts of the service are read, one portion by the minister and the other by the people, may at first have seemed to the stranger to be less solemn than the prayers themselves. But he feels the animation of such a service; he sees the interest of all around; he begins himself to read with them; and then he knows that this arrangement was not idly made; for his own heart follows the words which he speaks, without the effort of a listener.

A portion of the Book of Psalms is thus read, after the doxology; one verse by the minister, the next by the people; as of old, in the Jewish temple, one choir of Levites answered to another. The stranger observes a little difference between the words and those of his Bible. It is because the Psalms in the Prayer-book were placed there before the present translation of the Bible was made, and were never altered. He observes that they are divided into such portions, that one portion may be read on every morning or evening of the month. He thinks of what the Psalms contain, their praises, prayers, precepts and prophecies, and he rejoices that they are read whenever a congregation is assembled. His only objection is that, when they are thus read in their order, psalms of very different character are brought together; but he finds it hard to suggest a better method. Praise and penitence meet in a Christian heart; and it would surely be an error to use none but joyful Psalms on one Sunday, and on another none but lamentations.

After the Psalms, the people sit down, and the minister proceeds to read, first an appointed chapter, or "lesson," from the Old Testament, and then one from the New. Between them, all stand up and say

or sing that ancient and sublime anthem, called the Te Deum, which for fifteen centuries has been heard through all the Christian world. The stranger has probably been accustomed to worship where only one chapter of the Bible was read at each service. He is gratified that Episcopalians have so much of this best preaching. Perhaps, too, he has never listened to hymns sung or chanted in prose, like the Te Deum, or the Psalm at the close of the lessons from Scripture. But it falls solemnly on his ears: and he has learned that such was the manner in which the Psalms were sung in the temple at Jerusalem.

The whole congregation now utter together, with the minister, one of the two ancient Creeds. One is that which is called the Apostles' Creed, because, from the earliest ages, it was viewed as exactly what was taught by the Apostles. The other was set forth at the Council of Nice, in 325, and the Council of Constantinople, in 380, in defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, and received by all Christians. That every individual should thus with his mouth confess the Lord Jesus, the stranger heartily approves. When afterwards he knows more of the history of these Creeds, and how they have been maintained in all Churches, he wonders that he was never taught them till now.

Next, follow the prayers; and all are kneeling. They are divided into brief parts or collects, said by the minister; and at the close of each, which is usually with the name of Christ our Lord, the people, as in the time of St. Paul, answer, Amen. The stranger kneels: he feels that it is a becoming posture in prayer; and he loves to hear and to utter the Amen, when it is thus spoken at regular intervals, and by all at the same moment. In the midst of these prayers, occurs the Litany; a solemn form, to be said on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The early Christians chose these days for special

prayer; Wednesday, as the day when the Saviour was betrayed; Friday, as the day of the crucifixion. The Litany consists of short petitions, at each of which the people respond, saying usually, "Good Lord, deliver us;" or, "we beseech thee to hear us, good Lord." Before its chain of petitions is closed, the stranger feels that he has been led to ask in it all which he ought to wish for himself, his friends, his rulers, his pastors, his country, his fellow-Christians, and all mankind.

When the congregation rise from their knees, a Psalm in metre is sung, and he expects the sermon. But the minister here leaves the desk, and takes his stand beside the communion-table. Another part of the Prayer-book is opened: it is at the order for the celebration of the Holy Communion. The earlier portion of this service is read, even when there is no communion; a portion which embraces the Ten Commandments, and the Collect for the particular Sunday, with the short passages which are appointed as its appropriate Epistle and Gospel. At each of the Commandments, the people ask mercy for past transgression, and grace to keep this law in time to come; and all is then summed up in the two great commandments; — the love of God, and the love of our neighbor. When the Gospel is read, the people arise, as if in reverence to the words and acts of the Lord Jesus himself.

Each Sunday has its own name; and the eye of the stranger, glancing over the pages of the Prayer-book, observes the Sundays in Advent, after Christmas, after the Epiphany, in Lent, after Easter and after Trinity. To him these names are almost unknown; but afterwards, at his leisure, he studies their order, and is soon satisfied. Among almost all Christians, the year is divided into these same ecclesiastical seasons; and thus it has been from the earliest ages. The festival of Easter is the Sunday after the passover; and Whitsunday, the fiftieth day

from Easter, is the Sunday after Pentecost. These are two of the three great festivals of the Christian Church, as they were of the Jewish. The third is Christmas, the 25th day of December, kept in memory of the birth of the Lord Jesus. It answers, in some things, to the Jewish feast of tabernacles; since the Son of God came to have his tabernacle on earth. At Christmas, as at the feast of tabernacles, it is a custom to bring branches from the forest, evergreen branches, and hang them in the temples. About four weeks before Christmas form the season of Advent, a time of preparation for the celebration of the coming of Christ, once to save, and hereafter to judge; and forty days before Easter are the season of Lent, a time of solemn preparation for the celebration of His death and resurrection. The Church year begins with the season of Advent; then follows Christmas; then, the eighth day after, or New-Year's day, is noted as the day of the Circumcision of Christ; then, the 6th of January is called the Epiphany, or Manifestation, from His manifestation to the wise men of the Gentiles by the star in the east; then, after several weeks, follows the season of Lent, closing with Passion Week, so called from His passion or sufferings, and including Good Friday, the anniversary of His death; then Easter, the anniversary of His resurrection; then, forty days after, the anniversary of His ascension; then, ten days later, Whitsunday, the Christian Pentecost; then, a week later, Trinity Sunday, devoted to the revelation, thus complete in the events already remembered, of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; and the remainder of the year, including about six months, is divided by the twenty-seven Sundays after Trinity. Thus, the great facts of the Gospel are brought, one after another, before the mind; and in the course of the year, too, a day is given to the name of each of the apostles, and to a few of the other saints, or of the great events or truths of our religion. Some-

thing, the stranger says within himself, must surely be gained through such a round of holy seasons and subjects. As they glide along, they cannot but lead to thought and prayer: they permit neither the preacher nor the hearer to forget what it is most important to remember.

This information, however, is not yet in the power of the stranger, when he notices the passages chosen as the Epistle and Gospel for the day, from some one of the Epistles and Gospels of the New Testament. When these have been read, the minister proposes a hymn, and withdraws into the adjoining vestry. A question may here pass across the mind; Why should there be so many changes of place and posture, and so many divisions of the service? Between entering and leaving the church, the worshipper actually varies his position twenty times; and the clergyman stands in three different places. All, it is true, is only kneeling, standing, and sitting; and the minister only passes from the desk to the table, and from the table to the pulpit. But, all the while, the stranger feels that no religious exercises, of half the length, ever wearied him so little. These very changes have relieved his attention. He confesses that, although there are other reasons for each change, there is also a wisdom in change itself for the sake of preventing exhaustion; and that the same effect is produced by the shortness of each prayer, and the frequent response or amen.

The hymn is sung; the minister, in the mean while, returns from the vestry, and ascends the pulpit. He has laid aside the surplice, and is clothed in the black gown, which was once the dress of scholars in general, and has been retained by the ministers of various denominations. He is only to address the people, and has no distinction of dress except one which befits any public speaker on a solemn occasion.

After the sermon, one brief prayer is offered; and

the people depart, with that benediction which invokes upon them "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." But all linger for a moment on their knees, to ask silently that God would forgive their deficiencies, accept their services, write His word on their hearts, and make it fruitful in their lives. The stranger retires, and henceforth understands the morning prayer of the Episcopal Church, and remembers it with reverence.

On some Sunday afternoon, he renews his visit. He finds much the same order of services, except the Litany, and the portion read at the communion table. But possibly it may be a day when a child is, after the second chapter or lesson, presented for baptism. The parents, and two or three Christian friends, advance to the font or baptismal vessel. It is well known to the stranger that the Episcopal Church suffers little children, and forbids them not, to come to Christ in baptism; but it requires the presence and promise of those who are called sponsors, and who engage that the child shall be brought up in the knowledge of the word of God. The parents are very commonly the sponsors for their own children; with one or more others, chosen for their relationship, friendship, or pious benevolence. In the name of the child, the sponsors promise that he will keep the Christian covenant, by renouncing the world, the flesh and the devil, believing the articles of the Christian faith, and walking in the way of God's commandments. It is the same promise, as the stranger, in looking over the Prayer-book, may observe, which is given by an adult candidate for baptism, in his own name. The stranger easily perceives that it is the most solemn way of representing the duty both of the child and of the sponsor. When the water has been poured upon the infant, the sign of the cross is also made upon his forehead, "in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified." The stranger feels that the

sign is impressive and beautiful; and he knows that it was, amongst the first Christians, the universal badge of their religion. When the English Church required it at baptism, the Puritans murmured at such compulsion. The Episcopal Church in America does not require it, but omits it at the desire of any parents; and the omission is never desired. After this, the ear of the stranger is struck by the thanksgiving that "it hath pleased God to regenerate this infant with his Holy Spirit." He is perhaps startled; for he has been accustomed to hear of regeneration and conversion, as if they were the same change. As afterwards he looks over the Prayer-book, his eye lights upon a question of the Catechism: "What is required of persons to be baptized?" The answer is, repentance and faith. Another question follows, why infants should be baptized, who from their tender age cannot perform these conditions; and the answer is, that they promise them by their sponsors, and are bound, when they come of age, to perform their promise. He perceives, then, that no lasting blessing rests upon the child, if it grow up, unless it comply with the covenant of the gospel. But, in the mean while, he owns that, unless baptism were a mere ceremony, it must be the seal of some promise of spiritual blessing; a pledge of that grace, without which none can enter the kingdom of God. If it be this, well may it be called, as it is called in the Scriptures, a "washing of regeneration;" a "birth of water," not without the Holy Spirit, though not as if the work of the Holy Spirit were already accomplished.

Interested by the sight of the administration of one sacrament, he asks, perhaps, whether a spectator may remain at any time when the other is celebrated. Informed that he may not only remain, but if already a communicant elsewhere, is free to partake of the Lord's Supper at this altar, he stays with the rest, on the first Sunday of a month, and knows that it is

good to be there. He is conscientiously on his guard against any sound of Romish doctrine; but he hears nothing. All is careful; all is spiritual; all is Christ crucified, once for all. He kneels without hesitation, and prefers to kneel, that he may receive the bread and wine in the very act of prayer; he hears the solemn words of benediction with a thankful heart; and goes away rejoicing. Thus, thus, he exclaims, let the dying Saviour, the only hope of sinners, be ever remembered at His table!

On some bright morning, attracted by the sight of a pleasing train, who are entering the church-gate, he follows, to witness the service for holy matrimony. The bridal company stand near the altar. The minister, in his surplice, announces the purpose for which they are come, and calls on all, and on the bridegroom and the bride especially, if they know any thing which may make the union unlawful, to declare it now. He asks and receives from each a solemn consent to the espousal. He receives the bride from the hands of her father, near kinsman, or friend. The bridegroom repeats after him the promise to take, "for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do part;" and the bride, in her turn, gives her troth with a corresponding promise to "love, cherish, and obey." Then, directed by the minister, the bridegroom places on her finger the wedding-ring, declaring that he endows her with his worldly substance. Their hands are clasped by the minister, with the words, "those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." A prayer seals the union; they are solemnly pronounced man and wife, and are dismissed with the benediction of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The words which are last in their ears are, "that they may so live together in this life that in the world to come they may have life everlasting." If still unpledged by such

ties, the stranger silently wishes that thus, if ever, his nuptials may be blessed.

At another time, some summer afternoon, the toll of the church-bell calls his eye towards a different train, who are entering the same gate with slow and melancholy steps; and he enters behind them. The minister, in his white robe, meets them as they pass in; and the words of Christ echo through the arches: "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." As he proceeds up the aisle before the dead, he cries, with Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that at the latter day he shall stand upon the earth; and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." As he reaches the desk, the words are heard, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." An anthem, from the thirty-ninth and ninetieth Psalms, which tells of the mortality of man, is then said or sung; and then the sublime chapter from the first Epistle to the Corinthians is read, in which St. Paul treats of the resurrection. Perhaps a hymn may follow; and the body is then borne forth; the minister goes before; the mourners come after; and the voice of deep, plaintive prayer goes up at the grave. They lower the coffin, "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," "looking for the general resurrection in the last day." The voice is heard, which St. John heard from heaven, saying, "blessed are the dead who die in the Lord;" and with prayers of unequalled solemnity and tenderness the mourning assembly depart. Whoever the stranger be, and whatever his other feelings, his soul has thrilled while he listened. He has been on the borders of the world to come; and the grave has preached to him the everlasting gospel.

If now, with his increased knowledge of the Episcopal Church, his interest has increased, he may hear with pleasure of an expected visit of the Bishop. At that time, he is informed, the rite of confirmation, the laying on of hands, will be administered. He asks its meaning, and is reminded how the apostles laid their hands on persons who had been baptized, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. He remembers that, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "the doctrine of baptism, and of laying on of hands," is reckoned as among the first principles of the doctrine of Christ; with those of repentance and faith, of the resurrection and the judgment. He learns that this rite has been preserved, not only in the Protestant Episcopal Church, but in all the churches of the old world, except the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. He understands that it is the ordinance in which a person baptized in infancy or childhood publicly renews and assumes his Christian covenant. On the appointed day, he is present. The Bishop is at the communion-table; his dress, that which has been worn since the time of Cranmer, and substantially for many ages before, and differing somewhat from that of the other ministers. He probably preaches the sermon; and then the candidates are gathered before him. They are either young persons, taking the Christian vows upon them for the first time; or such persons as have but lately professed their faith at the font or the altar; or such as, having been devout members of some other denomination, now desire to attach themselves to the Episcopal communion. The Bishop, as the chief pastor, now asks whether each of them, in the presence of God and of the congregation, now ratifies and confirms the baptismal vow and covenant; and each of them answers, "I do." It is a sacred moment: the stranger thinks how that answer is written in heaven. They kneel at the rails before the communion table. The Bishop, after solemn prayer, lays his hands

upon the head of each, with the words, "Defend, O Lord, this thy servant with thy heavenly grace, that he may continue thine forever, and daily increase in thy Holy Spirit more and more until he come unto thine everlasting kingdom;" and the pastor and people say, Amen. The candidates arise from their knees; they are affectionately addressed by their Bishop, at this point of their lives, so momentous even for eternity; and with his exhortations, prayers, and blessing, they set out anew upon their pilgrimage towards heaven.

The stranger, now a stranger no longer, has thus been a witness of the chief services and customs of the Episcopal Church; and he not only condemns not, but heartily approves, their order, their solemnity, and their agreement with apostolic doctrine and practice. He has seen nothing Romish, nothing erroneous, nothing suspicious. Once more, he turns over the Prayer-book with careful attention. There are the "Articles of Religion," thirty-nine in number, established in 1562; adopted in 1801, by the Church in the United States. These Articles must decide the doctrine of the Episcopal Church; and in them the Romish doctrines, one after another, are distinctly denied; and the doctrines, commonly known as "Protestant," "Trinitarian," "Orthodox," and "Evangelical," are distinctly asserted.

But against one charge, he discovers elsewhere, that the Episcopal Church can make no defence. It is said to be, on one point, exclusive; and he discovers that on that point it is exclusive. It allows great freedom of judgment; it shuts out no believer from its communion; but it admits no minister to its pulpits, except those who have been ordained by a Bishop. This was a rule when there were none but Episcopal Churches in the whole world. The Presbyterians, the Congregationalists, the Baptists, the Friends, the Methodists, all went out from it, one after another, at different times, within the last three

hundred years. They gave up what it possessed; a ministry of Bishops, brought down in regular succession, through all the time of Papal corruption indeed, but from a time when the Bishop of Rome was no more than any other Bishop, except as Rome was a more illustrious city. There were Bishops in the land of our fathers as soon as there were Christians there. The Episcopal Church is the same Church which they planted: at one time it was Romanized; and it has been Reformed. It believes that there is a value in this regular succession of its ministry. Whether this value be greater or less, the stranger frankly acknowledges that it is not to be expected from the Episcopal Church that it will abandon its ancient rule from regard to those who have voluntarily relinquished what it has itself preserved.

If one who has in this manner become acquainted with the constitution, history, doctrines, and customs of the Episcopal Church, as it is, should now remain in the same neighborhood, every reader will judge for himself whether he will become a constant attendant on its worship, and an attached member of its communion. If he shall return to his former home, he will certainly carry with him the knowledge that this Church is not to be condemned; and that its claims deserve most serious consideration and respect. He will regard it as a firm and venerable bulwark of the truth as it is in Jesus. He will not grieve at its prosperity and progress. If he live to see as many changes in the religion of his country, as those who can remember fifty years past have seen, he may bless God that one Church promises to remain the same, anchored by its apostolic government and its fixed forms of worship.

hundred years. They gave up what it possessed; a ministry of Bishops, brought down in regular succession, through all the time of Papal corruption indeed, but from a time when the Bishop of Rome was no more than any other Bishop, except as Rome was a more illustrious city. There were Bishops in the land of our fathers as soon as there were Christians there. The Episcopal Church is the same Church which they planted: at one time it was Romanized; and it has been Reformed. It believes that there is a value in this regular succession of its ministry. Whether this value be greater or less, the stranger frankly acknowledges that it is not to be expected from the Episcopal Church that it will abandon its ancient rule from regard to those who have voluntarily relinquished what it has itself preserved.

If one who has in this manner become acquainted with the constitution, history, doctrines, and customs of the Episcopal Church, as it is, should now remain in the same neighborhood, every reader will judge for himself whether he will become a constant attendant on its worship, and an attached member of its communion. If he shall return to his former [illegible] he will certainly carry with him the knowledge that this Church is not to be condemned; and that its claims deserve most serious consideration and respect. He will regard it as a firm and venerable bulwark of the truth as it is in Jesus. He will not grieve at its prosperity and progress. If he live to see as many changes in the religion of his country, as those who can remember fifty years past have seen, he may bless God that one Church promises to remain the same, anchored by its apostolic government and its fixed forms of worship.